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C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 001679

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/10/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SN](#)  
SUBJECT: SOME CYCLISTS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS -  
POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN SINGAPORE

Classified By: DCM Daniel Shields for reasons 1.4(b)(d).

[11](#). (C) Summary: An internet blogger has revealed a double standard by the GOS on outdoor political events. In August, the opposition Workers' Party was denied a police permit to hold a mass cycling event and the GOS defended the decision in Parliament saying that no political party was allowed to organize "outdoor gatherings." The blogger then revealed that the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) Youth wing was advertising similar events on its website. This led to two PAP MPs claiming to the Straits Times newspaper that their events had already either been canceled or postponed due to a lack of interest and manpower. End Summary.

No Cycling For You  
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[12](#). (C) In early August, the opposition Workers' Party (WP) applied for a police permit to hold a mass cycling event at the East Coast Park on September 9. It was intended to kick off a series of activities to commemorate the party's 50th anniversary in November, WP Chairman and Non-Constituency MP Sylvia Lim told us on September 10. On August 14, the police denied WP's application. During the August 27 sitting of Parliament, Lim questioned the GOS for the reasons for the denial. Senior Minister of State for Law and Home Affairs Ho Peng Kee replied that no political party was allowed to organize "outdoor gatherings because such activities have the potential for public disorder and mischief, and may disrupt community life." Ho then stressed that this policy applied "to all political parties." When pressed by WP MP Low Thia Khiang for any examples of WP events causing such problems, Ho replied by saying "I don't know whether Mr. Low's hearing aid is with him because I know he wears one -- I have said that there is a greater potential for law and order problem."

Blogger Reveals All  
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[13](#). (SBU) On September 4, internet blogger "Mr. Brown" revealed that cycling with the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) must apparently be safer for the community, as the Young PAP (YP) had listed on its website a "Night Cycling" event for July 28 and an Amazing Race outdoor event for October 1. Three days later, "Mr. Brown" noted on his blog that the two events had disappeared from the YP calendar. (Note: "Mr. Brown" was fired from his column in the Today newspaper in July 2006 for pointing out that the GOS had raised some fees and taxes shortly after the PAP's May 2006 election victory. End Note.)

Deny, Deny, Deny  
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[14](#). (U) This led to two YP advisers denying in a September 8

article in the Straits Times newspaper that the two events had been dropped from the calendar after what had happened to the Workers' Party cycling event. PAP MP Lim Wee Kiak said the July 28 "Night Cycling" event had been canceled due to a lack of interest and claimed that the YP hadn't even organized it, even though it was listed on the YP website as "YP Night Cycling." PAP MP Zaqy Mohamed said the October 1 Amazing Race event had been postponed due to a shortage of manpower. He asserted that the decision to postpone the activity had come before the August 27 session of Parliament and they hadn't applied for a permit yet.

Comment

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15. (C) This incident reveals the sporadic ability of internet bloggers to keep the GOS on its toes. However, the government's control over the mainstream media ensures that the revelation of apparent double standards or ruling party MPs insulting people who wear hearing aids will cause minimal political damage to the PAP.

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